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Global leaders and celebrities praise nurses at International Council of Nurses Congress Opening Ceremony

Geneva, Switzerland; 2 November 2021 - His Holiness Pope Francis, Oprah Winfrey, Bono, and Key from the K-pop band SHINee were among the global leaders and celebrities whose messages of praise and support highlighted the Opening Ceremony of the International Council of Nurses (ICN) Congress.

More than 5500 nurses from 132 countries are registered to attend the biennial event, co-hosted this year by the Emirates Nursing Association, which is being held virtually for the first time ever.

Oprah Winfrey, global media leader and philanthropist, offered her “deep heartfelt gratitude” to nurses “who selflessly serve each patient who comes through the door”. She expressed her admiration and respect for nurses, saying,

“Extraordinary times call for extraordinary people, and nurses have time and time again answered that call, so my hope for you all as you gather with one another, as you acknowledge the tremendous weight and burden you have been shouldering, is that you continue to hold one another up and that you offer yourselves in grace to one another.”

Bono, the lead singer of the Irish band U2, thanked nurses for their bravery, saying

“All we can do, all I can do, is thank you for your service, thank you for your dedication, thank you for your compassion and your kindness, for respect and dignity that you afforded those people in their last final frightening hours.”

Pope Francis, who sent a letter to ICN in advance of the Congress, wrote to express his gratitude to nurses “for their selfless dedication shown at every stage of this global health crisis” and added that,

“He trusts the Congress will reaffirm nurses around the world in their concern for the integral welfare of the patients entrusted to their care, and draw attention to the irreplaceable service that they provide for the good of society.”

ICN Chief Executive Officer Howard Catton acted as master of ceremonies during the event, which included an address by ICN President Annette Kennedy, who spoke about the how nurses transformed care during the pandemic.

“The immense commitment and courage that nurses have demonstrated during this pandemic make me optimistic for the future and I urge nurses to seize the opportunity to make their voices heard, despite the serious challenges ahead. We will carry on the legacy of ICN through leadership, working together and political influence.”

Guest of honour at the ceremony, Her Royal Highness Princess Muna al Hussein of Jordan, gave a speech saying,

"It is clear that our best defence for future pandemics or any crisis, will be a solid, comprehensive health system that builds on core public health competencies and aligns across all levels of government to achieve universal health coverage and to ensure the right to health for all while leaving no one behind.

'In this connection, can nurses play a key role in navigating the future of health care and contributing to building a stronger and equitable health system of their nations? The answer is: absolutely yes, they can!"

Five awards were presented at the Opening Ceremony.

The **Christiane Reimann Prize** recognises outstanding nursing achievement and is known all over the world as nursing's most prestigious international award. The award was given to Dr Sheuan Lee, an outstanding nurse leader, who has served as President of the Taiwan Nurse Association and an ICN Board Member. In 2008, she was appointed as Minister without Portfolio in the Examination Yuan, which oversees the examination of civil servants, by the President of Taiwan. This was the first time a nurse has been appointed at the ministerial level in Taiwan.

ICN's **Health and Human Rights Award** recognises truly significant humanitarian contributions and achievements in the domain of health and human rights. It is ICN's only award intended for a non-nurse or non-nursing group. This year the award was presented to Lord Nigel Crisp, the co-Chair of Nursing Now, who had the foresight from a very early stage to recognise the importance of healthcare as part of human rights.

The **Kim Mo Im Policy Innovation and Impact Award** was presented to Professor Abel Avelino de Paiva e Silva for his contributions to the development of the ontology reference model which is recognised as a reference for its policy of information systems and for the representation of formal knowledge involved in nursing care.

The **Partners in Development Award**, which recognises foundations, corporations, NGOs or other groups that have demonstrated outstanding leadership and investment in nursing and health care capacity building, was given to CGFNS International for their support of the ICN Leadership for Change programme in China. The ICN Partners in Development Award recognises foundations, corporations, non-governmental organisations or other groups that have demonstrated outstanding leadership and investment in nursing and health care capacity building.

The ICN and Florence Nightingale International Foundation's **International Achievement Award** recognised two Austrian nurses, Marianne Stoeger and Margaret Pissar, for their lifelong devotion and sacrifice in treating patients with Hansen's disease on Sorok Island, in South Korea.

The ICN Congress includes a three-day scientific programme, during which nurses and nurse academics share their experiences and present their research with the intention of disseminating best practice around the world. The Congress includes six plenary sessions with expert speakers from across the globe including Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organization, Mr Ban Ki-moon, former United Nations General Secretary, Michelle Bachelet, High Commissioner for Human Rights and former President of Chile, Guy Ryder, Director General of the International Labour Organization, and the Right Honourable Helen Clark, former Prime Minister of New Zealand, amongst others.

For more information on the Congress and how to register, click [here](#).

Note to Editors

The **International Council of Nurses (ICN)** is a federation of more than 130 national nurses' associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses and leading nursing internationally, ICN works to ensure quality care for all and sound health policies globally.

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